

2/14/2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 6616, AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF  
HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO IMMIGRATION STATUS.

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrist, and distinguished members of the Human  
Services Committee:

On behalf of the Jewish Community of Greater Hartford, the board of the Jewish Community  
Relations Council (JCRC) of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford goes on record in support  
of House Bill 6616.

The Jewish Community Relations Council educates and galvanizes the Jewish community on  
issues of social justice, combats hate, and advocates for public policy consistent with Jewish  
values. One of the main objectives of the JCRC is to advocate for legislation that will improve  
the lives of the most vulnerable in our state, including those who live in poverty. This goal stems  
from our requirement as Jews that we take action to repair the world and that we treat the  
stranger as would treat ourselves.

Today we write in support of H.B. 6616, an act that would expand HUSKY – the state subsidized  
health insurance program for low income children, to include those who are otherwise eligible  
between the ages of 13 to 20, but who currently do not qualify due to their immigration status.  
The current law only provides low-income children who are undocumented such coverage from  
birth until age 12. The bill would increase the eligible age for this health care benefit to 25 six  
months from its effective date, June 1, 2024. The bill also would increase to age 18 the eligibility  
of an undocumented child for similar state health insurance where the child's household has a  
slightly higher income level but is still sufficiently low to income to qualify for HUSKY.

According to the Kaiser Foundation Report, *Health Care Coverage and Care of Immigrants*  
(December 2022), in 2021, non-citizens, including both those lawfully present and  
undocumented immigrants, are significantly more likely to be uninsured than citizens.<sup>1</sup> The  
report found that “one in four (25%) of lawfully present immigrants and almost half (46%) of  
undocumented immigrants were uninsured compared to 8% of citizens.” See  
<https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-and-care-of-immigrants/>  
 (“Kaiser report”). Most adult non-citizens are likely to be employed in low wage  
jobs where the employers do not offer health insurance. Due to their low incomes, non-citizens  
confront more challenges in affording coverage when it is offered by an employer. Other than for  
emergency medical services, undocumented individuals do not qualify for Medicaid or CHIP  
(the federal Children's Health Insurance Program), nor can they purchase coverage through the  
ACA marketplace. See Kaiser report.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Kaiser Foundation Report, in 2021, non-citizens made up approximately 23% of the *uninsured*  
non-elderly adult population in the U.S. This group makes up about 6% of the total population in the U.S.. It  
includes those who entered the U.S. without authorization as well as those who entered lawfully and stayed after  
their visas or other authorized status expired.

Like their adult counterparts, undocumented children are substantially more likely to be uninsured than children of citizens. Data in 2021 shows that about 32% of undocumented children in the U.S. are uninsured, as compared to 19% of lawfully present immigrant children, and 4% of children who are citizens. (Kaiser Report - analysis of data from American Community Survey, 2021). This fact portends unfavorable consequences among the most vulnerable individuals residing in our state. Research in California as a result of the state's expansion of the law in 2016 to insure low-income children regardless of immigration status resulted in a 34% reduction in uninsurance rates. In addition, a 2022 study in the American Academy of Pediatrics journal, *Pediatrics*, has shown that in states that expanded health insurance coverage to low-income children regardless of immigration status, fewer children were uninsured, and fewer had forgone medical care, dental care, and preventive health visits as opposed to in states that had not expanded such coverage. See *Pediatrics, Insurance and Health Care Outcomes in Regions Where Undocumented Children are Medicaid Eligible*, Julia Rosenberg, M.D. et al (September, 2022).

As of December 2022, nine states and the District of Columbia provide medical coverage to low-income children through at least age 18, regardless of their immigration status. These include our neighboring states Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Vermont, and Maine, as well as Illinois, Washington, California and Oregon and the District of Columbia. (Kaiser report with links to State public insurance websites). Connecticut, as one of the most affluent states in the U.S., should follow the lead of these states and ensure the health of our low-income residents until they reach young adulthood. As we have experienced with the pandemic, the health of one of us has an impact on the rest of us. This legislation would help to keep the entire community healthy, not just those currently without insurance. Thus, expanding the age of those eligible for state subsidized health insurance regardless of immigration status can only promote the health of our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration. You are welcome to contact us with any questions by contacting JCRC Director Danielle Moghadam at [dmoghadam@jewishhartford.org](mailto:dmoghadam@jewishhartford.org) or (860) 727-6152.

Sincerely,

GARY S. STARR, CHAIR, JCRC, JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER HARTFORD

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